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ABSTRACT

This paper, part of a larger study on the emergence of the Joint Big Decisions Committee (JBDC) in higher education management practices, focuses on how the JBDC has functioned in light of existing organizational governance models. The paper begins with a literature review which presents and discusses various management model types. These model varieties, each of which is considered a distinctly different approach to organizational theory, are as follows: bureaucratic; rational choice, decision process, collegial, political, and cultural. In addition, the results of a study that examined the JBDC process on four campuses (the University of Montana, Missoula; Georgia Southern College, Statesboro; Shippensburg University, Pennsylvania; and West Virginia University, Morgantown) are provided. The study examines and compares the patterns of the JBDC decision-making process on these campuses in order to address whether or not the JBDC actually represented a new model of governance. The leadership of the JBDC on these campuses is also analyzed as to its overall effectiveness in accomplishing the goals of the institution and working within the organizational structure. Recommendations are offered for university presidents who may be considering the implementation of a JBDC. Contains 31 references. (GLR)

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Goal Setting and Decision Making in
"Joint Big Decisions Committees"

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To

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Campus Governance Models at Work:
Goal Setting and Decision Making in "Joint Big Decisions Committees"

Every so often, disciples of the higher education literature are blessed with a text that profoundly influences the thoughts and behavior of those who practice the academic trade. Such a treatise burst upon the scene in 1983 when George Keller's Academic Strategy: The Management Revolution in American Higher Education hit the shelves. In it Keller described what is in essence a paradigm shift in postsecondary education management practices. He has documented the need for a changing attitude toward and approach to the management of the academic enterprise and offers many illustrations of campus cases in point.

Several key features of an emerging new management style in the academy are noted in that work:

- Administrators are assuming a more active role.
- Financial matters are gaining prominence in decision making.
- Campus governance is being reconfigured.
- Communication is more open and bidirectional.
- Concern for quality of the work force is on the rise.
- Reliance on technology as a management tool is common.
- Campuses are becoming more future-oriented, and administrators are becoming more management-oriented.
- Market concerns and the external environment are monitored.
- Planning is viewed as essential.

These observed patterns constitute a major shift in the way higher education organizations do business.

One of Keller's observations in particular--that campus governance was assuming new forms--piqued the curiosity of this researcher. He noted that:

Faculty senates are slowly collapsing or becoming dormant. A new kind of cabinet government is taking shape. The campus president must move more quickly and vigorously but continue to have faculty advice and guidance--and have someone with whom to share the blame for mistakes. The professors, especially the senior ones, want to help decide their own and their institution's futures--but not too openly and without full responsibility for their decisions. Enter a new body: the Joint Big Decisions Committee (1983, p. 61).

This excerpt raised several questions. Were there, in fact, many examples of Joint Big Decisions Committees (or JBDCs) across the nation's campuses? Were they addressing major issues that were of profound significance to their organizations? Who comprised these committees, and how were they influencing institutional decision making? Might they eventually replace more traditional forms of governance such as faculty senates and unions? JBDCs appeared to have tremendous potential, but their relative effectiveness and persistence as a governance mode was only surmised.

Thus, a research project was designed employing the multiple case study method to investigate this emergent form of governance, the JBDC. As Keller defined them, these groups would be typically composed of senior members of the faculty, key administrators, some junior faculty, and perhaps staff, students, or trustees; they would be chaired by a chief academic officer; their deliberations would tend to be private; and they would advise the president on courses of action to take. Approximately thirty prospective JBDC

campuses were identified through a series of phone calls to state offices of higher education, principally along the eastern seaboard. Eventually, four prospects were chosen, and campus access was granted by their presidents. Site visits were conducted in the summer of 1988 over a four-week period, during which time sixty-five focused interviews of the Merton and Kendall (1946) type were completed with JBDC members and other key campus individuals.

The study was concerned with four specific research questions:

- (1) Why does a particular campus establish a JBDC?
- (2) What is the relationship between the JBDC and the rest of the campus governance operation?
- (3) How has the JBDC functioned in light of existing organizational governance models?
- (4) What impact has the JBDC had on the campus?

Each research question suggested several related others, all of which were thoroughly investigated and their interrelationships fully reported earlier (Corak, 1990).

The focus of this paper is the third research question and the relative fit of the JBDC with existing organizational models of governance as described in the higher education literature. Joint Big Decisions Committees were reportedly addressing issues of strategic importance to their campuses. It was corporate and military environs that first gave birth to strategic decision making. Would this imply that campus JBDCs would retain a bureaucratic flavor? Might a JBDC represent an entirely new model of governance? Or rather, would it prove to be more a variation of an existing model? Would JBDCs perhaps function more like a hybrid between or among models? A brief review of the literature's models will help to set the stage.

The Models.

When Max Weber, the forerunner of organizational model builders, described the Ideal Bureaucracy he surely was not thinking of the College or University (Weber, 1947). Over time, the study of organizations has matured, and model building has naturally become more extensive. A typology of models has been developed and refined. Of course, the academy is indeed an organization, yet as such, it is distinctly different from classical organizations in various ways (Baldrige, Curtis, Ecker & Riley, 1977). Birnbaum (1988) has credited "governance" with being the concept that has best distinguished higher education institutions from other types of organizations. He notes:

There is no single and generally accepted definition of governance; it has been variously discussed in terms of structures, legal relationships, authority patterns, rights and responsibilities, and decision-making processes [emphasis added].... A governance system is an institution's answer...to the enduring question..."Who's in charge here?" (p. 4).

Indeed, the study of governance, or decision making, in higher education has inspired many to articulate various organizational models that may be applied particularly to the higher education setting. Today, models of the following general varieties may be reviewed in the literature: bureaucratic, rational choice, decision process, collegial, political, and cultural. In many cases there is some conceptual overlap, yet each may be viewed as a distinctly different approach to organizational theory. Dessler (1980) draws distinctions between classical and contemporary organization theories. The former reflect and were often inspired by the effects of industrialization and its concern for production and efficiency. More contemporary theories have reflected a growing interest in the

human factor and in how human relations affect the work place. Contemporary theories have personalized organizations, shifting the focus away from the institution as an entity and toward its membership as thinking, feeling participants. Bureaucratic models are of the classical ilk.

Bureaucratic Models

Although it is difficult, at best, to envision the membership of the higher education organization as passive participants in decision making, many scholars nonetheless have observed evidence of the more classical organization theories driving activities within that setting (Blau, 1973; Callahan, 1962; Millett, 1978). Application of bureaucratic principles to educational settings is representative of an authoritarian type model of organization (Henderson & Henderson, 1974). Power is vested at the top of the hierarchy, responsibility is delegated to various levels, and the flow of communication is primarily downward. Based on their studies, Henderson and Henderson concluded that the trend in education was "toward the more complete utilization of business philosophy and methodology" (1974, p. 214).

Such a trend is certainly evident in postsecondary education. Keller (1983) has offered an inside look at what he describes as a management revolution in American higher education. He notes that the concept of "management" in education still stimulates negative reactions from academics who associate it with the business place. Nonetheless, many scholars have turned their attention to matters of finance, operations research, decision theory, marketing and market research, social forecasting, strategic planning, and organizational theory in higher education, all of which were spawned in that other arena. Business practices, he confirms are very much alive in academe.

Clearly, principles of organizational behavior have been applied to education for many years now. Sergiovanni (1984) attributes a continuing interest in Taylor-type (1912) "scientific management" practices to a period of economic instability and to the expectation that all public organizations should be held accountable. It stems, he contends, from the value placed on efficiency and rationality by Western cultures.

Baldrige, Curtis, Ecker and Riley have drawn distinctions between higher education organizations and other types of bureaucracies on five dimensions:

They have ambiguous goals that are often strongly contested. They serve clients who demand a voice in the decision-making process. They have a problematic technology, for in order to serve clients their technology must be holistic and adaptable to individual needs. They are professional organizations in which employees demand a large measure of control over institutional decision processes. Finally, they are becoming more and more vulnerable to their environments (1977, p. 14).

Theories of the scientific management genre, they note, assume that the organization's goals are clear, that the organization is a closed system insulated from environmental influences, and that those organization members who do the planning have the power to carry out their decisions. Subsequently, bureaucratic practices are not designed to work well in the higher education setting.

Pfeffer (1981) has compared organizational models in terms of their decision-making power. He notes that in bureaucratic models "choices are made according to rules and processes which have been adaptive and effective in the past" (p. 22). Habit and history constrain future operations; ultimately, "decisions are not made as much they

evolve [emphasis added] from the policies, procedures, and rules which constitute the organization and its memory" (p. 23). This perspective on organizational decision making differs markedly from the cognitive models of rationality to be reviewed next.

Rational Choice Models

Attributed with being the prominent decision-making models reflected in the social science literature (Pfeffer, 1981), rational choice models presume that behavior is purposive and consistent. They hold that there are goals and objectives which characterize organizations. Given consistent goals, a set of decision-making alternatives can then be generated and a choice made from among them.

The concept of "bounded rationality" suggests that limits are set on the extent to which any search for decision-making alternatives is conducted (Simon, 1957). Humans are limited both in terms of their abilities to process information and in terms of the extent of resources to be devoted to search activities. Alternatives are investigated only until a satisfactory one is found. Because bureaucratic organizations rely heavily on rules, precedent, and standard operating procedures, less time is taken in decision making and fewer alternatives are investigated in the process. Pfeffer (1981) indicated that it is the difference in the amount of time devoted to decision-making activities and goal attainment that distinguishes between the bureaucratic and rational choice models.

In a subsequent work, Pfeffer (1982) drew another important distinction between these types of models. He observed that in bureaucratic models action, behavior, and cognition are viewed as responses to external stimuli or situations and are put into play to make sense of circumstances retrospectively rather than to guide behavior prospectively. Rational choice models, on the other hand, assume that autonomous, conscious, and foresightful action can be taken to achieve some goal or value. Pfeffer simultaneously described yet a third perspective on action and noted that decision process models were of this type.

Decision Process Models

This third view of behavior eschews either an externally determined (bureaucratic) or internally directed (cognitive) rationality. "Action" from this perspective is emergent, almost random, and is dependent on process and social construction. Many scholars have concluded that this perspective aptly describes decision-making processes in higher education. In their characterization of universities as "organized anarchies," Cohen and March (1974) joined those ranks.

Organized anarchies are described as organizations with problematic goals, unclear technology, and fluid participation in decision making. The decision-making model they have articulated is that of the "garbage can" whereby decision outcomes are the result of the particular mix of problems, solutions, participants, and choice opportunities that come together at any one time. Because there are assumed to be no overarching organizational goals, intentionality is lacking. Decisions, therefore, are worked on until a choice is made. And, given the fluidity of participation and the competing interests in both problems and solutions among participants at any given time, prediction is fairly impossible.

Weick elaborated on this chance coupling of people and issues, describing educational organizations as loosely coupled systems: "Loose coupling simply connotes things, 'anythings,' that may be tied together either weakly or infrequently or slowly or with minimal interdependence" (1976, p. 70). The concept of loose coupling provides a

powerful means of talking about organizational complexity, in that it explains how parties to a decision come together and move apart as circumstances shift.

In sharp contrast to the bureaucratic and rational choice models, the decision process perspective posits that "there are no overall organizational goals being maximized through choice, and no powerful actors with defined preferences who possess resources through which they seek to obtain those preferences" (Pfeffer, 1981, p. 25). Goals are the outcome of sense making that occurs after the fact to explain or rationalize action. Olsen refers to these as artifactual (or nondecision) models where decisions are "a post factum construct produced by participants or onlookers" (1976, p. 83).

Decision process models can account for the sometimes observed randomness of decision outcomes. They do not provide a great amount of predictive power. Pfeffer contends that it is their de-emphasis on intention that makes them "unpopular with those who view the world in a more proactive, strategic fashion" (1981, p. 27).

Collegial Models

Another prominent series of models of governance in higher education pertains to the university "collegium" or "community of scholars." Arguments favoring the collegial paradigm as the preferred governance model in higher education center around: (1) the management of the university and the full participation of the members of the academic community in its management, (2) the professional, technical competence of the faculty and the resultant authority derived from that, and (3) ideals of how the educational process should operate (Baldrige, 1971). Several have chronicled the historical changes in governance patterns in American higher education, attesting to the fact that the collegium is a relatively new concept on the scene (Duryea, 1973; Jencks & Riesman, 1968). Corson (1960) reflected on this shift in locus of power away from presidents and boards and toward the faculty and concluded that, in fact, an "organizational dualism" existed in higher education. He distinguished separate spheres of governance between academic affairs and administrative affairs, noting that faculty attended to the former, while presidents and governing boards resolved the latter.

That distinctive realms of decision-making power prevailed appealed to Millett (1962) who proposed that as many as four constituent groups comprised the higher education organization: faculty, students, alumni, and administrators. His thesis was that the power relationship among the groups was based not on hierarchical authority, but on shared, community interests. This differs markedly from the top-down authority of bureaucratic models. It is interesting to note, however, that the "community of scholars" notion is reconcilable with either the rational choice models--where alternatives are systematically reviewed to maximize goals--or the decision process models--where intentionality is absent and, therefore, goal maximization is not valued. Both can accommodate the idea of a collegium. However, Millett's view that collegial decision making was achieved through a "dynamic of consensus" would tend to imply that the university community does indeed recognize some generally shared objectives (1962, p. 235).

Henderson and Henderson (1974) support this assertion in their description of a collegial model known as the "group participative plan." This model assumes that colleges and universities are organizations with a variety of goals, that there is reasonably united support for those goals, and that members (educators and students) voluntarily associate with each other because of a shared commitment to those goals. They believe such a collegial model best accounts for the complexity of individual and group interests. They note that the morale of the total organization depends largely on the satisfaction of its

members, and that morale is critical for optimizing results in the field of education. Group participative theory is believed to meet both psychological and sociological needs.

This concern for personal and social needs is very reflective of the human relations and human resources management theories. The theme is recurrent in the collegial model material. Sergiovanni (1984) notes that this perspective encourages shared decision making, joint planning, common goals, increased responsibility, and more autonomy. The potential of the organization member is considered as are intrinsic motivators and the maximization of one's personal development in the work environment.

There are those, however, who would remind us that the maximization of one individual's personal development may compete with or be contrary to another's development in the same environment. Competing interests give rise to conflict, a concept felt to be inadequately addressed in the collegial model material (Baldrige, 1971; Baldrige et al. 1978; Pfeffer, 1981, 1982). For this reason, many believe a political model offers a more inclusive interpretation of university governance.

Political Models

Pfeffer describes political models as those which view organizations as "pluralistic and divided into various interests, subunits, and subcultures. Conflict is viewed as normal or at least customary.... [Further,] when preferences conflict, the power of the various social actors determines the outcome of the decision process" (1981, p. 28). Political models are indeed power models wherein power is defined as "the capability of one social actor to overcome resistance in achieving a desired objective or result" (p. 2). It is a force that is context or relationship specific, and it is a structural phenomenon that is created by a division of labor and departmentalization.

Baldrige (1971) has observed that institutional policy decisions significantly affect the campus in that they mold the organization's future. Policy issues arouse the interests of many competing groups; policy therefore, becomes a major point of conflict. This is compounded by the fact that a university has pluralistic goals. Its faculty, for example, has competing teaching versus research orientations, pure versus applied science orientations, divergent specializations within disciplines, and cosmopolitan versus local orientations. Conflict-provoking issues can arise anywhere at anytime, but such situations tend to have identifiable, general characteristics. First, there is the "iceberg phenomenon" where the apparent issue is not the major factor at all but may be "only a pretense for raising more fundamental issues of participation in decision making, the rights of students or faculty, or the role of interest groups in the political process" (Baldrige, 1971, p. 167). Second, issues causing large scale conflict tend to have a unifying effect on diverse interest groups. Third, conflict often results from rising expectations rather than from intolerable conditions. Finally, the issue may have moral overtones which lend legitimacy to radical action.

Like decision process models, political models assume that no overarching organizational goal exists, or even if one does exist, that decisions are made that may be inconsistent with goal maximization. It is the power structure in social systems, rather than goals, precedent, or chance, that brings about decision outcomes in political models (Pfeffer, 1981).

Sergiovanni (1984) further reflects on these models of organization and draws four distinctions between the political perspective and those emphasizing either efficiency (e.g. bureaucratic or rational choice) or the person (e.g. collegial perspectives). First, the political perspective perceives the organization as an open system, affecting and affected by forces in the external environment. The other views are primarily concerned with

forces, events, and activities that are internal to the organization. Second, while the other views focus on policy decisions, the political view is concerned with policy development. Third, the other perspectives minimize conflict while the political perspective considers conflict both natural and necessary. Finally, the bureaucratic, rational choice and collegial models assume a rationality to decision making; the political (like the decision process models) no not. Since goals are negotiated, not given, and since the organization interactively "bargains" for outcomes with its external environment, a rational establishment of clear goals is unlikely. In this mode, "administrators do not seek optimal solutions to the problems they face but seek solutions that will satisfy a variety of demands" (Sergiovanni, 1984, p. 7).

Each of these models--the bureaucratic, rational choice, decision process, collegial, and political--can enlighten thinking about the process of decision making in higher education. And there is yet another perspective to consider.

Cultural Models

The cultural perspective continues to receive a great deal of attention from the scholarly community. Cultural models hold that the purpose of inquiry is to understand and make sense of, rather than to explain or describe. The focus is upon the unique aspects of particular issues and situations.

In his discussion of three types of perspectives on action, Pfeffer (1982) differentiates between those in which action is purposive, intentional, goal-directed and rational and those in which action is externally constrained and controlled. Both types, however, are causal models. Connections between exogenous variables and endogenous results can be displayed. The third group of theories differs from the other two in that it tends to be more focused on process and on the construction of meaning around events that unfold over time. Also, these theories are not cause-and-effect models but tend to suggest more interactivity between causation and outcomes. Further, these theories rely more on qualitative methodologies for their investigations. Cultural models of organization fit into this third perspective on action, where action is seen as emergent, almost random, and dependent on process and social construction.

Cultural models also have been characterized as the symbolic approach to the study of organizations (Bolman & Deal, 1984). They are based on a series of basic assumptions about the nature of organizations and human behavior. First, it is not the event but the meaning attached to the event that is considered important. Second, this "meaning" is determined by the ways that humans have interpreted what happened. Third, many of the most significant events and processes are substantially ambiguous or uncertain. These very features undermine the use of rational approaches to analysis, problem solving, and decision making. Fourth, when faced with uncertainty and ambiguity, humans create symbols that will reduce those conditions by making sense out of events. Such symbols include myths, stories and fairy tales, rituals and ceremonies, metaphors, humor, and play.

An Eclectic Use of Models

Each of the models reviewed adds dimension to the study of governance and decision making in higher education. Sergiovanni (1984) argues that administrators need not view organizational theories as competing with each other. Rather, leaders should look to several theories and integrate them meaningfully, calling upon the different perspectives to illuminate various aspects of the problems they face. Birnbaum (1988) has proposed a means of integrating these various models into a "cybernetic model", described as a more flexible approach to understanding complex organizations like higher

education. He notes that "while some organizations frequently appear to reflect some of the characteristics of one model, there are no colleges or universities in the real world that reflect one model's characteristics all of the time" (p. xvii). Cultural theory can be credited for assisting many to recognize the utility of an eclectic approach to model application.

Some Generalizations About the Campuses.

The four campuses involved in this study were the University of Montana (UM) in Missoula, Georgia Southern College (GSC) in Statesboro, Shippensburg University (SU) of Pennsylvania, and West Virginia University (WVU) in Morgantown. UM and GSC both had had 1980s Joint Big Decisions Committees with a finite life span--five years and three years, respectively. JBDCs have been in place at SU since 1984 and at WVU since 1986.

The four Joint Big Decisions Committees studied share one reason in common for their inception. Each was put into place when its president determined that an academic focus and a participative approach to decision making was in order. The underlying motives differed from an awareness of the fact that inclusion of academics in decision making was politically astute, to a genuine, philosophical commitment to collegial participation. Additionally, in each case it was clear that "institutional planning" was a key element in each group's mission. However, "planning" came to be interpreted very broadly. The domain of the JBDCs was to encompass many related matters including redefining institutional mission, program and curricular review, and best use of fiscal resources.

An analysis of the relationship of these groups to preexisting governance structures revealed additional commonalities. It may be said that on all four campuses, the JBDCs were certainly centers of interest to the community and were generally well-supported by their constituents. Support for JBDC activities is clearly related to the manner in which these group memberships were constituted. Students have not been significant contributors. Staff have been grateful, even honored, to be included. Faculty and their senates and unions have been watchful, yet approving. Deans have had the most to lose. Indeed, these JBDCs provide irrefutable evidence of a shift of decision-making responsibility to a new body on their campuses. They are definitely in the decision-making business, although formally the decisions rendered are offered to the president in the form of "recommendations." Their ability to influence ultimate action depends on the personality, style of management, and agenda of the president. Their charge has been broad. They are to address very important campus matters. But there is a tendency to mire themselves in details, bypassing the opportunity to meet their potential as direction givers for their campuses.

In each case the JBDC can be shown to have made contributions to its campus. Each one was credited with opening up decision-making practices, making public those issues formerly resolved behind closed doors. All four campuses reported that the presence of their JBDCs increased faculty participation opportunities. The broad-based involvement generated by the JBDC, coupled with the group's attention to institutional mission and goals, has had a cohesive effect on these campuses. Further, each can be credited with focusing community attention on organization weaknesses.

However, although a JBDC invites participation, the potential for involvement exceeds its utilization. It is also evident that these JBDCs held great promise in the eyes of their campus communities. When expectations exceed the group's ability to make changes, frustrations and resentments are noted. The timetable, participants' understanding of the workings of the organization, and their ability to address broad policy matters affect these expectations. Even though these JBDCs helped their campuses

to develop a community perspective, they could not guarantee that everyone would pull together. Merely charging the group with an organizational overview does not assure such an outcome.

The JBDC and Governance Models.

For the purposes of this study, the researcher donned cultural model lenses and assembled a list of questions inspired by Pfeffer's (1981) description of various decision-making model dimensions. Those interviewed were asked to interpret events relative to the goal-setting and decision-making behavior of their JBDCs. Indeed, patterns began to emerge.

An examination by campus of group and institutional goals included: whether or not the group was committed to an organizational perspective, how goals were set and by whom, and whether the JBDC developed a common understanding of and support for those goals. An inquiry into decision-making practices looked at personal and group behavior, rules and norms, and informational needs and use. In combination, this inspection of goal and decision-making characteristics proved to be a very useful "hook" for determining which model type was evident within a JBDC.

Three of the campuses acknowledged an initial understanding that their JBDC was expected to support overarching, institutional goals. However, the mere instruction to "think globally" does not insure that the overview will be adopted and adhered to. Goals may either be set by the JBDC or for it. For example, some JBDCs are given the responsibility for articulating the organization's goals; others monitor goal maintenance. A common understanding of group and institutional goals is not likely to be achieved unless the JBDC spends some time arriving at a meeting of minds on this matter. For some campuses, partisanship has precluded the adoption of widely shared support for goals. The charge to the JBDC, its membership composition, and the larger environment will all play a role in determining the success of this important group objective.

Despite the differences among the four JBDCs, a common aspect of group and individual behavior was civility. Discourse could become heated, but tempers were held in check. The heterogeneity of the groups meant that some members were better versed on the workings of the organization than were others. Time was lost in educating those persons along the way. Always there will be those who do more of the speaking and those who do more of the listening. The ability of the chair to include everyone, to keep the group focused and moving, can have much to do with the JBDC's success.

These groups differed greatly in the extent to which they were structured. WVU and UM had timetables and subcommittees and stringent voting procedures. SU has a written constitution spelling out JBDC responsibilities and procedures right down to the use of Robert's Rules of Order. GSC began with an elaborate flow chart to guide it, but soon abandoned that time line and floundered in the absence of structure. All four JBDCs had access to information to the extent it was institutionally available. Three of the four were just inundated with information to the point that it was indigestible. Had information been better distilled for them before they received it, each could have utilized data more effectively.

Based on four examples from the field, then, could it be determined that JBDCs actually represent a new model of governance? Are they, rather, a new example of an existing model? Or are they more of a hybrid of existing models? An exciting turn of events in this study was the realization that JBDCs do not, as a group, fit any of these models. Each of the four studied had a distinctly different "personality." Despite the fact that they have many features in common, JBDCs can be different enough to parallel

contrary models described in the literature. And, although one model type may predominate within a JBDC, aspects of other model types may also be present. Further, a particular model type characterization of a given JBDC is fixed only at a point in time. This characterization is not static; during its life span, a JBDC may undergo a metamorphosis from one model type to another.

The analyses of the four study sites bear this out. The JBDC at WVU had a rational choice personality. At UM, the JBDC followed political model predictions. The SU committee closely resembled the bureaucratic model. And at GSC, the JBDC looked remarkably like a decision process operation. In each case one model could be pinpointed as predominant; yet the activities of the JBDCs at both WVU and SU also strongly suggest the collegial influence. Examples of "pure" model types may be rare. It could be that JBDC operations are more commonly of a hybrid model type. Although it was concluded that UM's JBDC operated politically, it was also clear that it had not started out that way. That which began as a collegial and rational choice approach to decision making evolved into a political approach by its second year. In all, JBDCs cannot be "type cast" as representative of any one particular governance model.

Others have observed that campus communities may vary greatly in the extent to which they parallel different governance models (Birnbaum, 1988; Chaffee & Tierney, 1988; Hardy & Zammuto, 1989). This study concluded that Joint Big Decisions Committees follow that suit and resemble different models from campus to campus. The JBDC is but a feature of the total campus organization. As such, when it finds its niche it is more likely to serve as a manifestation of the predominant organizational model already in place, more so than a reflection of a bureaucratic model adaptation suddenly superimposed onto the campus. The JBDC is but one entity within the organization. JBDC members are also organization members and have multiple roles to fill within that context. Therefore, the JBDC and its members do not operate in a vacuum, but function within the larger organizational context. That JBDC operations and expressions would be consistent with the "mood" of the larger organization environment is sensible. The workings of the JBDC can be said to reflect that larger context.

An appreciation for the certainty that the JBDC is grounded within the context of the larger organization helps to account for the fact that its impact has varied so markedly from one campus to another. If it is indeed designed to address major, campus-wide issues, the JBDC, with its broad representation, has the potential for developing a collective mind set within the campus community. As such, it seems quite possible that a JBDC could serve as the vehicle for evolving the organizational culture in new directions. The extent to which the JBDC will succeed or fail in this regard seems to be dependent upon the president.

It is the president who determines whether the group will be empowered and effective. The specificity of the charge, the leader's motives and his/her willingness to be influenced by the group's deliberations are all key variables that affect the JBDC's capability to contribute to the organization. The president is not only instrumental to their effectiveness as decision-making groups, but also to their survival. Group initiatives of this type serve at the pleasure of the president. A change in leadership likely spells an end to (or, at least, a suspension of) this decision-making process for a campus. Presidential support is probably the best overall predictor of JBDC success.

The JBDC and Leadership.

Is it the organization's leader, then, who makes or breaks a JBDC? Is it the president's personality, or motives, or style of management that is the critical criterion?

Although that may seem to follow logically from the argument, the evidence does not support this conclusion.

Take, for example, the JBDCs at UM and at WVU. Although structurally similar, their outcomes were not. A diagnosis of JBDC activities at UM found that it did not accomplish its planning objectives. As a contributor to its organization, it promised more than it was able to deliver. The UM president was thought not to be much influenced by its deliberations. However, the JBDC at WVU was apparently fulfilling its planning objectives and was more than meeting the community's expectations. JBDC members there believed they were indeed influencing their president. And yet, in both cases, the president was the same man! The president at UM resigned his position to begin leading WVU as their new president. The same man initiated a JBDC on both campuses. In one case successes were deemed minimal, but in the other they were affirmed to be many. To conclude that the president is the sole predictor of JBDC success, then, would be an oversimplification.

Tinto (1975) ushered in an era of college student retention research when he described the matching of student expectations with campus resources as "institutional fit." This concept of "fit" can be extended to include the fit between the leader and the organization--its members, its history, and its external environment. The institutional fit between the man and the culture of the University of Montana was not as tight as the fit between the same man and the culture of West Virginia University. Clearly, in the latter case support from both the community and the president for the JBDC have resulted in a better organizational fit. More effective JBDC outcomes have occurred.

The analyses of the Shippensburg University and Georgia Southern College JBDCs point to the same conclusion. Shippensburg University's president fit well into that organizational milieu. He wanted more complete participation in academic decision making and led the institution down that path--its JBDC has been very successful. Georgia Southern College's president had a different agenda than did his JBDC, and initiated the group only at the suggestion of others. He was not committed to the process. His fit with the institution was less than ideal in the last phase of his presidency there. "Institutional fit" becomes a useful concept to apply to the JBDC analysis.

Does this mean that in the absence of a close institutional fit between the president and the campus a JBDC cannot make a contribution? This is a possibility that may warrant further investigation. Birnbaum contends that in most settings the role of administrators "is probably not so much to create [culture] as it is to sustain it once it has been created" (1988, p. 81). However, in the rapidly changing environment in which the higher education enterprise finds itself today, this would seem to be an insufficient role for leadership. A much loftier leadership objective is to assess the horizon and to reorient institutional culture to keep the organization in step with a changing environment. Culture is an evolving condition. It is not static. Even a stable culture--a "culture of continuity", as described by Chaffee and Tierney (1988)--undergoes change. And, a sense of "organizational momentum" (Rice & Austin, 1988) has been shown to improve institutional climate. A leader must ready the campus for change.

One means through which a leader can mobilize a culture for change is to address strategic change, coupling an internal review with an external analysis. In her discussion of operationalizing strategic planning, Chan (1986) notes that it is a challenge to build strategic planning into the institutional culture. "The essential principle underlying strategic planning is to develop a good fit between the institution and its environment," she observes (p.1). Once again the concept of "fit" informs the discussion.

But a leader must not assume that he or she is "stuck" with "fitting" the existing organizational culture into its environmental niche. A leader must analyze not only campus culture but also administrative strengths and weaknesses and then adapt a model that will assist the culture to evolve in a goal-directed fashion. Masland (1985) has provided some helpful suggestions for uncovering organizational culture. Certainly, understanding the organizational saga is a means of avoiding bloody revolution as the leader seeks to evolve the culture.

An assessment of organizational culture and of leadership strategies is a necessary first step. For the astute president, a Joint Big Decisions Committee can then become a viable vehicle for cultural transformation. Field analyses affirm that JBDCs have been successfully used to evolve campus culture, thereby developing the desired institutional/environmental fit that had been previously wanting. The JBDC can act as a change agent. It can help to transform the campus by institutionalizing strategic planning into goal-setting and decision-making activities. Properly charged, carefully comprised, and sufficiently empowered, JBDCs synthesize the rational, political, and psychological features of strategic management that Keller (1991) avows to be so necessary to today's higher education enterprise. Joint Big Decisions Committees indeed can be remarkably effective instruments of change.

Recommendations for the JBDC Initiator

The following suggestions are based on observations made and conclusions drawn by the researcher from the field data. They are offered in the form of a list of suggestions for the president who is considering the implementation of a Joint Big Decisions Committee.

1. Organize an initial orientation period for JBDC members that provides an overview of the organization, including its internal and external components. Members should share a common understanding of how the institution works before they are asked to make any decisions on its behalf. It should not be assumed that this basic knowledge is widely shared among JBDC members at the onset.
2. Take pains in considering how the membership will be composed. Whether they are elected or appointed, those persons invited to participate in the JBDC should have the authority to speak for their own areas. Those with budget and planning responsibilities for major campus units should not be excluded. Inclusion of those with this legitimate power is probably more critical to JBDC success than is representativeness.
3. The appointment of the chief academic affairs officer as the group's chair will certainly tend to keep an academic focus foremost in members' minds. It may be just as important to assure that the chair is also one who is skilled in small group facilitation, who can enable all to contribute, and who can keep the group from killing time in too much detailed deliberation; they need to be kept "on task."
4. Group objectives must be precisely understood. Not only must they be spelled out from the beginning, but the group must take time to develop a shared understanding of those objectives. Time should be allocated to assure that the group arrives at this articulated, common understanding.
5. The group must adopt and adhere to a global, that is, campus wide, perspective. It should be expected that attentiveness to this broad overview will be monitored by the group and that the focus will always be pulled back to overarching objectives when the group's perspective is deemed to have become too narrowed.
6. Enough structure in terms of process and agenda should be provided to the group to the extent that attainable objectives can be set and achieved within a reasonable time frame. JBDC operations should not be so precisely spelled out as to leave no room for adaptation or evolution. The group should have a hand in setting its own structure to assure a sense of ownership and faith in it. On the other hand, some structure should definitely be provided in advance. In the absence of structure, the JBDC will flounder, attempting to define its process rather than engaging in its process.
7. Consider the governance ambience of the institution and the best ways to fit presidential objectives with organizational expectations. Be willing to make adjustments to the plan. Be willing to take well-considered advice when it is specifically requested.

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